



Introduction

A. FOLA

The Friends of Lake Apopka (FOLA) was formed in 1991 as a citizen advocacy group dedicated to the continued restoration of Lake Apopka. The group is made up of teachers, lawyers, farmers, students, housewives, bankers and small business people supported by the West Orange Chamber of Commerce and many local private and public entities throughout Central Florida.

In 1999, the Friends of Lake Apopka launched the Lake Apopka Basin Planning Initiative to promote regional cooperation. In February 2000, the Lake Apopka Basin Steering Committee was created to formalize the initiative's work and to work on regional scale initiatives. Each of the basin's jurisdictions appointed elected officials to serve on the committee.

The Steering Committee's work has focused on examining those natural resources and features in the basin that are important to sustaining the lake's ecological integrity. The committee also has examined opportunities to capitalize on the social and economic benefits of these resources.

In October 2000, FOLA and Orange County hired a consultant to prepare Development Design Guidelines to minimize the impacts of point and non-point pollution run-off, provide public access, improve property values, protect lake shorelines within the Basin and protect the environment. The guidelines were designed to apply to the entire Basin. Lake County also recently adopted those guidelines.

In 2001, FOLA commissioned Land Design Innovations to prepare this conceptual master plan for greenways, trails, recreation and eco-tourism opportunities in the Lake Apopka Basin.

B. Lake Apopka

Lake Apopka, located in northwest Orange County and southeast Lake County, is the fourth largest lake in the State of Florida. Lake Apopka is the headwaters of the Harris Chain of Lakes. Fed by a natural spring, rainfall and stormwater runoff, the water from Lake Apopka flows through the Apopka-Beauclair Canal and into lakes Beauclair and Dora. From Lake Dora, water flows to Lake Eustis, then to Lake Grif-

fin and finally northward into the Ocklawaha River, which flows into the St. Johns River. There are six municipalities within the Lake Apopka basin, including Apopka, Ocoee, Winter Garden, Oakland, Montverde and Clermont (see Map 1).

Lake Apopka was once the largest lake in the State of Florida. There were 21 fish camps located along the west shoreline. Through the thirties and early forties, it was known worldwide for sport fishing. Anglers traveled from throughout the United States to fish for trophy-sized bass in Lake Apopka.

In 1941, the Zellwood Drainage and Water Control District constructed a levy along the north side of the lake and ultimately drained approximately 18,000 to 20,000 acres for agricultural purposes, reducing the lake to its current size.

In the 1950s, the popularity of Lake Apopka as a recreational destination was impacted by declining water quality. Several factors contributed to this concern, including: the loss of 20,000 acres of wetlands along the lake's north shore to farming operations; agricultural discharges laden with phosphorus; treated wastewater discharges from shoreline communi-

ties; and discharges from citrus processing plants. In addition, the bass population significantly declined as gizzard shad became the predominant fish species in the lake. As a result, Lake Apopka lost its reputation as a recreational destination.

B. St. Johns River Water Management District

In 1985, the Florida legislature directed the St. John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD) to restore Lake Apopka to a Class III water body, fit for wildlife and recreation. In 1996, the legislature directed that the "muck" farms along the lake's northern shore be purchased and restored. The Legislature and USDA Wetlands Reserve Program have provided the \$103 million in funding for the acquisitions that were completed in August 1999. With the 14,000 acres of former muck farms now out of production, the application of pesticides and fertilizers has stopped at those sites. Ending the runoff of fertilizers was necessary to clean up Lake Apopka and the associated impacts to the downstream Harris Chain of Lakes.



Lake Apopka Greenways & Trails Master Plan

According to the SJRWMD, Lake Apopka is showing signs of rebounding. Since 1995, a 33 percent decline in phosphorus in the lake water and a 31 percent increase in water clarity have been observed. Also, since 1995, scientists have seen spontaneous growth of beneficial native vegetation on the lake bottom that has been nearly absent from the lake in recent decades. More dramatic improvements are anticipated at Lake Apopka in the coming years.

D. East Central Florida Regional Planning Council

The East Central Regional Planning Council has provided technical and administrative support to the Lake Apopka Basin Steering Committee. In November 2000, the ECFRPC prepared a report entitled "Lake Apopka, A Basin-Wide Planning Initiative". In that report, the ECFRPC identified five areas that were considered strategically important to the basin in that each was a key piece for achieving an ecologically and economically sustainable future. The areas examined included:

- ? Shoreline Protection
- ? Greenways and Trails
- ? Viewsheds

- ? Public Access
- ? Natural Setting

The report identified needs, opportunities, and areas where the basin jurisdictions should direct their collective energy and resources.

Given the involvement of the ECFRPC on past Lake Apopka studies, commission staff has been instrumental in providing most of the inventory and some of the ideas used in the preparation of this master plan.

E. The Statewide Greenways and Trails Plan

Connecting Florida's Communities with Greenways and Trails: The Five-Year Implementation Plan for the Florida Greenways and Trails System (the Plan) was developed by the State of Florida, through the work and consensus of a broad range of groups. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails, is in charge of overseeing implementation of the Plan, which was adopted by the Legislature in 1999. The Plan promotes a system that will help ensure a more sustainable future for Florida. The plan was designed to link natural ar-

eas and open spaces, connect native landscapes and ecosystems and offer recreational opportunities across the State.

This system will connect residents and visitors to the State's natural heritage, enhance their sense of place, and enrich their quality of life.

This master plan is intended to identify opportunities for connecting the Lake Apopka loop to the statewide system of greenways and trails.



The Lake Apopka Master Plan

Map 1: Lake Apopka and Surrounding Municipalities



— Basin boundary

The purpose of this plan is to create a framework for implementing a system of bikeways, trails and greenways around Lake Apopka. The trail system, in conjunction with key recreation and eco-tourism sites, will attract people to the lake, raise their awareness of Lake Apopka as an important natural resource, and educate the public on the importance of preserving Florida's natural resources. Proposed trail segments, trailheads and eco-tourism sites are identified on Map 12.

In the future, we anticipate that people from all over Central Florida and other parts of the State, will be attracted to the following types of recreational facilities and activities around Lake Apopka:

- ? Activity-Based Recreation Facilities - Facilities designed for specific recreational purposes, such as human-made pools for swimming, courts (tennis, basketball, etc.) and fields (football, soccer, etc.).
- ? Resource-Based Recreation Facilities- Facilities dependent on natural resources such as primitive camping, hiking, walking, bicycling, horseback riding, canoeing, etc.
- ? Lake Access - Viewing, fishing and boating.
- ? Environmental Education/Interpretation - Bird watching, butterfly gardens, Xeriscape gardens, nature/interactive tours, field trips, day camps.

- ? Historical Resources - Montverde Academy, pump house, farmers lodge.
- ? Lodging - Rustic bed & breakfast inns and spas.

The proposed Lake Apopka loop will be connected to the West Orange Trail (19 miles), and eventually to the South Lake/Lake Minneola Scenic Trail (21 miles when complete), and the Gen. James A. Van Fleet Trail (29 miles), increasing the accessibility to the Lake Apopka area and furthering the purpose of the State-wide Greenways and Trails Plan.



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Map 2: Lake Apopka Trailheads and Eco-tourism Sites



- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| — Basin boundary | — West Orange Trail |
| — Proposed Greenways & Trails | - - - WOT Extension |
| — Lake Minneola Scenic Trail | ① Trailheads/ Eco-Tourism Sites |

A. Eco-tourism Opportunities and Trailheads

Florida's economy relies on tourism. Eco-tourism — nature-based vacation destinations and activities — is a growing segment of this economy. Greenways and trails are logical destinations for those travelers seeking to incorporate an ecological experience into their vacations.

The first step in preparing this master plan was to identify key locations that had the potential to become eco-tourism locations— sites that were appropriate for active or passive recreation or other activities that would attract visitors to the Lake Apopka area and provide access (visual or physical) to the lake. These sites will enhance the quality of the recreational experience of trail users. Proposed trailheads will be actively promoted to encourage maximum use throughout the system with due consideration for environmental and archaeological sensitivity.

LDI identified 5 existing eco-tourism sites along the shores of Lake Apopka, where points of regional interest (recreational/eco-tourism sites) can be developed to attract visitors to the lake. Three additional sites have also been proposed. A ninth site, located in Clermont, has been identified as a key site in the system as it would represent the gateway to the Lake Apopka loop. The existing and proposed trailheads/eco-tourism sites are as follows (see Map 2):

1. Magnolia Park
2. Ocoee Property (Coca-Cola property)
3. Winter Garden Recreation Complex
4. Oakland Nature Preserve
5. Downtown Montverde
6. Lake County Lakeshore Park (proposed)
7. Lake County Aquatic Park (proposed)
8. Bird Sanctuary/Nature Center (proposed)
9. Lake Minneola Urban Waterfront Park (proposed)

The following Chapter explores the current conditions of these sites, and identifies the potential for recreation and eco-tourism activities to be developed on the nine sites.



Lake Apopka Greenways & Trails Master Plan



View of lake Apopka from Magnolia Park

Trailhead 1—Magnolia Park (Apopka)

Existing Conditions

Magnolia Park is a 56-acre Orange County park located at 2929 Binion Road (see Map 3). The park, which is split by Binion Road, offers rental pavilions, picnic areas, a boat ramp, camping area for tents and RVs, sand volleyball, and playgrounds. The camping area is located on the east side of Binion Road.

There are several public properties in close proximity to Magnolia Park. The City of Apopka recently purchased some land to the northeast of the park to build a Civic Center. Also in proximity to Magnolia Park is the “Mid-Florida Research and Education Center” (MREC), which is part of the University of Florida.

Recommendations:

This trailhead already offers both active and passive recreational opportunities. Improvements recommended for Magnolia Park include:

1. Study the possibility of expansion. Property to the north along the lake appear to be environmentally sensitive and could be protected with a park designation. Expansion should also be considered to the south and east of the park boundaries.

2. Connect Magnolia Park to the West Orange Trail (WOT) to the southeast, and to the Ocoee property described in the next section (Trailhead 2). Ingram Road and McCormick road are potential connections. Those connections need to be explored during the design phase. Orange County owns several acres of land north of the Ingram/McCormick intersection. If the County builds an extension of the WOT through those properties, the trail could potentially connect to Magnolia Park. There are only a few private properties between the County lands and the park, and they are currently under single ownership.
3. 2. Connect the east and west sections of the park with a prominent pedestrian crossing/path.
4. 3. Add panoramic telescopes to the west park with conceptual maps locating jurisdictions along the lake.
5. 4. Provide markers with interesting facts about Lake Apopka.
6. 5. Offer educational programs (school trips, camps, workshops)
7. Explore additional public access to the lake.
8. Develop an interactive native vegetation program to teach children about native plants, or an art trail - each marker explaining plants or art exhibits.



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Map 3: Trailhead 1 - Magnolia Park



See Map Legend on Page iii.

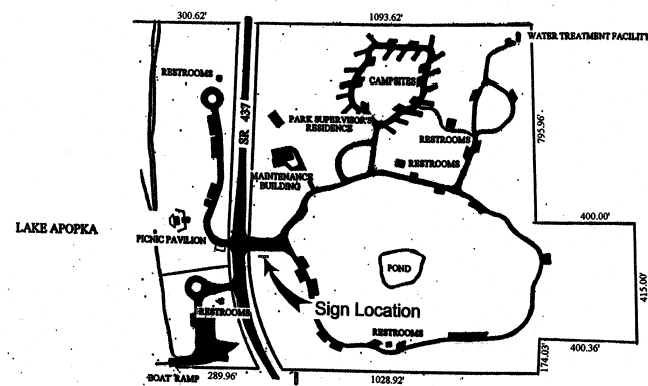


Figure 1: Magnolia Park Site Plan





Lake Apopka Greenways & Trails Master Plan



Trailhead 2—Ocoee Property/ Mitigation Area

Existing Conditions:

The City of Ocoee owns an approximately 350-acre tract (known as the Coca-Cola Property) between the Beltway and Lake Apopka (see Map 4). The City is currently in the process of preparing a master plan for the property to include a mix of commercial, residential, civic and recreation uses. Preliminary plans show approximately 7 acres of wetlands to remain as conservation, and the potential for approximately 40 acres of parks and recreation. The West Orange Trail currently traverses the property.

The City of Ocoee and the St. Johns River Water Management District have been actively pursuing the purchase of lands immediately to the south of this site (Crown Point). Those properties (a total of approximately 200 acres) have been restricted to conservation uses to mitigate the construction of the Beltway. There is a pristine wetland system on the site, which functions as an outfall for the Northwest Drainage Ditch serving Ocoee and Winter Garden. The site, which is comprised of several vacant parcels, provides habitat for numerous plants and animal species. Nearby properties have been known to provide habitat for Gopher tortoise, fox and birds of prey.

There are two subdivisions currently proposed to the north of this site: *Avanti*, adjacent to

the subject property to the north, was approved as a private development with no public pedestrian connections to the north or south. It does, however, provide for approximately 5,000 feet of trail for use by the subdivision residents. The other subdivision, *Forest Brook*, is currently undergoing City review. Although the connection to Magnolia Park will not be feasible along the lakeshore, the potential to connect by going around the subdivisions is still feasible.

Recommendations:

The Coca-Cola Property and the site to the south offer great educational and recreational opportunities. Proposed improvements to this trailhead include:

1. Setting aside a 2 to 5 acre area for a **Butterfly Garden** (see examples below).
2. Provide a trail between the West Orange trail and Lake Apopka. The City of Ocoee should consider a Resolution to officially express the City's commitment to work with Orange County to extend the West Orange Trail to the proposed park areas and Butterfly Garden and, most important, to the lake
3. Provide a boardwalk, lake access in the form of pedestrian dock or boat ramp, and panoramic telescopes.
4. The City in conjunction with the water management district should consider developing nature trails within the Mitigation Area.



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Map 4: Trailhead 2—Ocoee Property/Mitigation Area



See Map Legend on Page iii.

Examples of Butterfly Gardens

"Of the 760 butterfly species that occur in North America, about 100 can be found in Florida. These do not include the skippers (of which Florida is home to an additional 70 species). You can't attract butterfly species that are not present naturally in your region, nor can you grow plants that aren't adapted to the soils and climate in your region of the state. Butterfly gardening should not try to improve nature but complement it as the best horticultural practices have always done." (Butterfly Gardening Website at www.butterflywebsite.com).

There are several Butterfly Gardens in Florida. Two of the largest are the Butterfly World in Coconut Creek and the Panhandle Butterfly House in Navarre. The following information was obtained from their individual websites.

? Butterfly World at Tradewinds Park, Coconut Creek, Florida

"IMAGINE ... walking through a lush tropical rain forest, exotic butterflies fly overhead and all around you, stopping to feed on the nectar blossoms covering the path in this, their natural paradise. Does this sound like a DREAM? Well, proof that dreams come true exists at Butterfly World, where you can walk among thousands of LIVE butterflies in all stages of life and enter their habitat."

Butterfly World opened its doors to the public

in March 1988, making it the first and largest butterfly house in the United States. The \$1.2 million facility was built on 2.8 acres of leased county land at no cost to taxpayers. It provides visitors with a beautifully-landscaped, unique scientific and educational showplace that has become one of the landmark attractions of South Florida.

As many as 80 butterfly species from South and Central America, the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, and other Asian nations are typically found within the aviaries. Some of the favorites include the Owl butterfly, and the brilliant Blue Morpho.

????The Panhandle Butterfly House at The Nature Walk, Navarre, Florida

"There's something timeless about watching a butterfly in flight. It takes you back to your childhood if you're an adult and captivates you if you're a child. The effortless, graceful flight of literally hundreds of these creatures can be seen right here on the Emerald Coast, at the Panhandle Butterfly House. It is one of the handful of butterfly houses in the entire country dedicated to native species, so what you see here you might very well see in your back yard when you go home. Come and explore the beautiful Nature Walk, and while you're there, stop in and see the butterflies in all their glory."

Navarre is located in the Northwest panhandle of Florida, southern tip of Santa Rosa County. The Nature Walk, a one mile waterfront board-



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walk in Navarre, meanders along the Santa Rosa Sound offering a spring-fed fish pond, playground equipment, picnic and recreation area. An extension of the Nature Walk, the **Panhandle Butterfly House**, houses 200 species of native butterflies and 1,200 native plants for a 'hands-on' experience for the entire family. All stages of the butterfly's development can be observed in their natural habitat. This seasonal wonderland provides children of all ages the opportunity to view butterflies as never before.

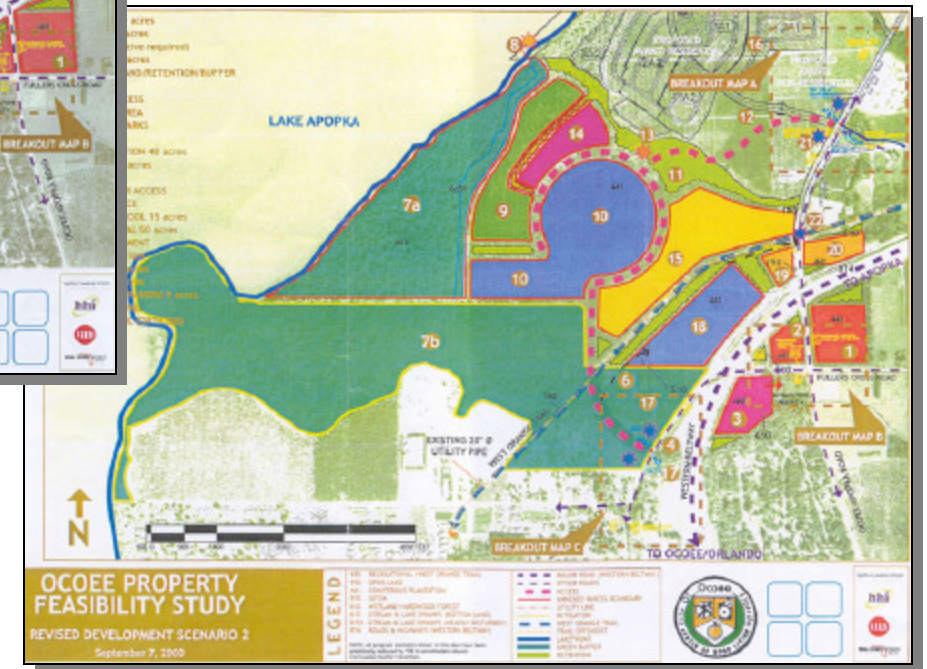
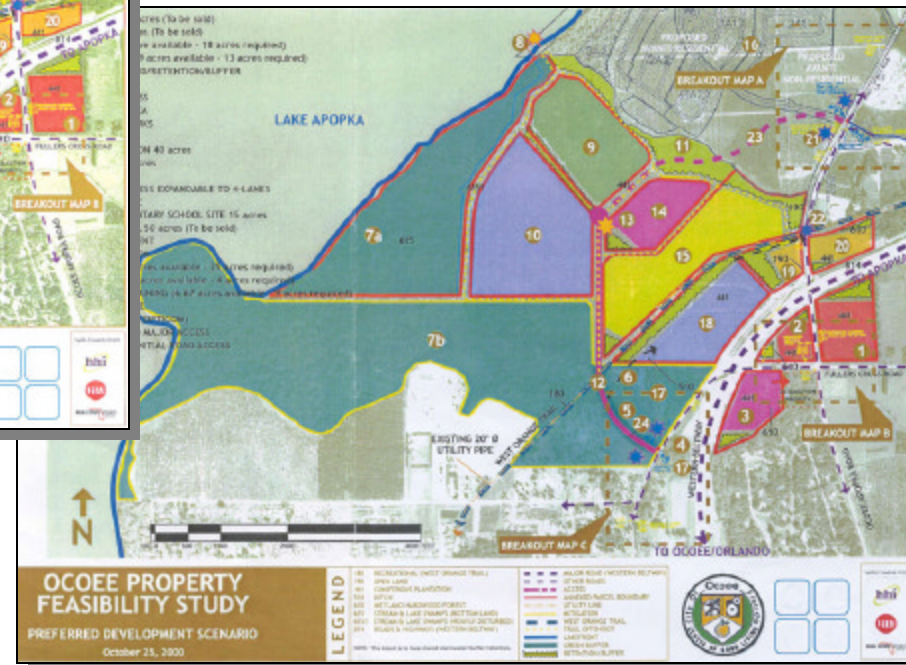
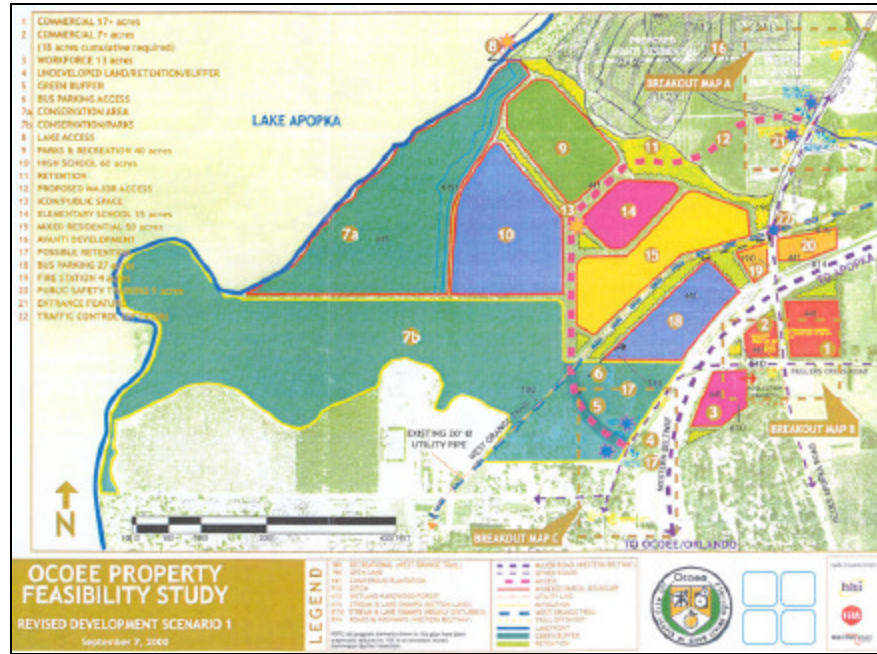


Figure 2: Ocoee Property Feasibility Study



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Trailhead 3—Winter Garden Recreation Complex

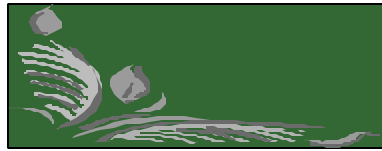
Existing Conditions:

The City of Winter Garden owns a series of properties along Lake Apopka (see Map 5). These properties house the City's Wastewater treatment plant, the City's Recreation Department, Tanner Hall Auditorium, a neighborhood park, a boat ramp, and a mobile home park. The City also owns a linear tract along Lulu Creek. This tract offers the potential for creating a linear park to connect the West Orange Trail with the City Recreation complex on the lake.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a trail/linear wetland park along Lulu Creek to bring the pedestrian/bicycle traffic from the West Orange Trail to the lakeshore. According to Winter Garden staff, the City has approached the County with the idea of a linear park. The next step would be obtaining support from the SJRWMD.
2. Create a trail connecting the linear park with the recreation department site on Surprise Drive. This segment could be done either through the mobile home park or along existing roads in the area.





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Map 5: Trailhead 3—Winter Garden Recreation Complex and Lulu Creek



See Map Legend on Page iii.

Figure 3: Aerial Photograph of Winter Garden Recreation Complex





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Trailhead 4—Oakland Nature Preserve

Existing Conditions:

The Oakland Nature Preserve, located west of the Town of Oakland, comprises 103.34 acres (see map 6). The preserve is located on the north side of the West Orange Trail along the shore of Lake Apopka.

The preserve has biological, geological, and topographical variety and, when complete, it will be a productive, living laboratory representative of the diversity of nature in Central Florida, which is quickly vanishing. The forested wetlands of the preserve have dense canopies of Green Ash and Red Maple with ground covers of lush Royal, Swamp, and Cinnamon Ferns. The uplands have Hackberry, Elderberry, Wild Cherry, Laurel and Live Oaks, and will include Turkey Oaks and Long Leaf Pines in the restored areas.

At present, the Preserve offers an interpretive walk and an amphitheater used for educational purposes. When completed, the Preserve will also include boardwalks, a two-story observation tower, pavilions, a pedestrian dock to provide lake access, and hiking and nature trails.

"The mission of the Oakland Nature Preserve is Educating, Conserving and Restoring."

Recommendations:

1. Continue implementing the planned improvements for the Oakland Nature Preserve
2. Continue looking for the possibility of expansion.



Figure 4—Oakland Nature Preserve



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Map 6: Oakland Nature Preserve



See Map Legend on Page iii.

Figure 5: Oakland Nature Preserve Master Plan



Source: Oakland Nature Preserve brochure





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Montverde Academy

Trailhead 5 - Downtown Montverde

Existing Conditions:

The Town of Montverde is located on the west shore of Lake Apopka. Some interesting sites within the town include:

- ? The Montverde Academy- Founded in 1912 as the Montverde Industrial School. The school has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools since 1927, and is now a private, non-profit boarding school. The campus includes several buildings of architectural and historical value.
- ? Montverde Town Cemetery - located one block east of CR 455. Eight confederate and one Union veterans are buried there; a relatively high number of Civil War Veterans for a cemetery of its size in Central Florida.
- ? Montverde Future Park Site - The town recently acquired a 30-acre tract on CR 455 for the development of a City park.
- ? Truskett Park: City park on Lake Apopka.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a bicycle trail that traverses the town, and encourage the trail users to stop and tour the town. A restaurant or coffee shop in the heart of the town would be an

ideal spot to take a break from a long bike ride.

2. Spurs should be created from the main trail to Truskett Park, which is located on Lake Apopka, and other parks in the Town.
3. Create an observation platform at the end of Osgood Road to provide access to Lake Apopka.



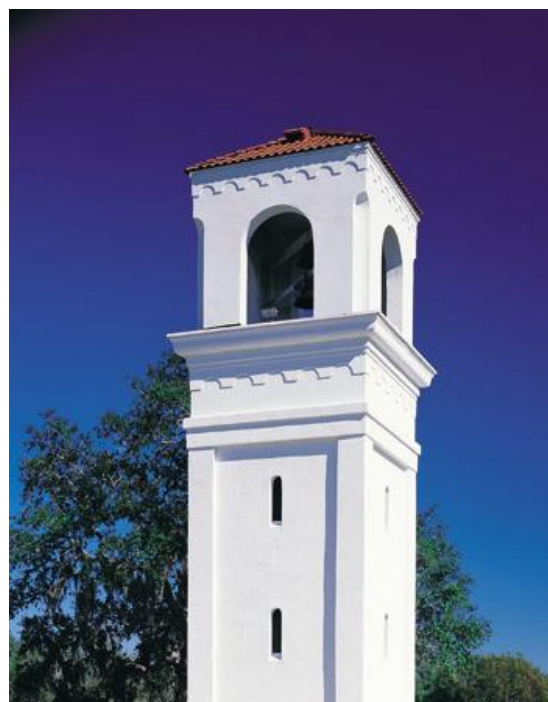
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Map 7: Trailhead 5 - Town of Montverde



See Map Legend on Page iii.

Figure 6: Montverde Pictures





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Trailhead 6 - Lake County Lakefront Preserve

Existing Conditions:

There are several vacant properties between the north boundary of Montverde and the SJRWMD Restoration Area. These lands have the greatest potential for preservation and creation of a nature preserve within Lake County (see Map 8). The potential sites, located within a 1000.93-acre area once considered for acquisition by the Lake County Water Authority, include the area known as Lost Swamp, a large forested wetland, uplands and adjacent upland buffers. The Lost Swamp area was included as a qualifying area in the 1995 Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) report. With restoration, the upland buffer area would provide further protection of the wetlands. Some of this area has producing groves as well.

Recommendations:

Delineate a 200 to 400-acre site to create a County park/nature preserve to be managed by Lake County. The preserve would include a large portion of wetlands, which could be protected with a park designation. The preserve site could be connected to the other trailheads through the proposed Tavares & Gulf Trail (Lake County plans) and/or, if feasible, through boardwalks over the wetland areas.

The location of this park would benefit from the presence of the scenic highway leading to it.

The proposed scenario for this park would be an unobtrusive holistic health and spiritual wellness retreat center. Through a public-private venture the park could offer accommodations (bed & breakfast atmosphere), spa services, workshops (cooking, gardening, aromatherapy, massage, reflexology, meditation, and crafts). These facilities would be located on the upland portions of the site. Examples of activities to be provided in this type of setting are as follows (taken from the Gecko Latitudes site):

"We offer scientific Ecotours for school groups and for anyone who wishes to participate in the scientific collection of baseline data designed to help understand and document the health and conditions of our existing environment. These Ecotours include the collection of water quality, photo documentation, and biological measurements of local ecosystems. Learn how to collect and document ecological and environmental conditions, while helping to provide a baseline of knowledge for the future!"



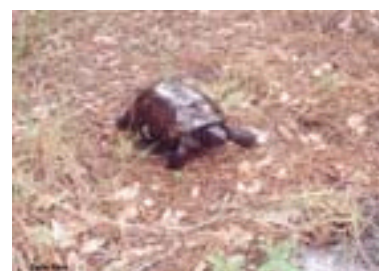
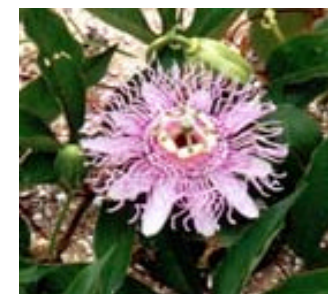
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Map 8: Trailhead 6 - Lake County Lakefront Preserve



See Map Legend on Page iii.

Figure 7: Lakefront Preserve Proposed Activities





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Trailhead 7 - Aquatic Park (Lake County)

Existing Conditions:

The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) is developing a plan for public access to the recent farmland acquisitions on the north shore of the lake. A recreation area on the west end of the property includes trails for hiking and biking, observation platforms, and opportunities for bird watching (see Map 9). The SJRWMD provides tours or visits upon request by various public and governmental groups.

Points of interest in the area:

- Clay Island
- Lock and Dam
- Observation platforms
- Apopka-Beauclair Canal

Recommendations:

Continue developing this area into a regional aquatic park in a natural, open setting, offering resource-based recreational activities related to the lake such as canoeing, sailing and fishing. The park could also offer a pavilion showing the history of Lake Apopka, and primitive campsites. Park guests would discover the history, stories, truths, and myths about the

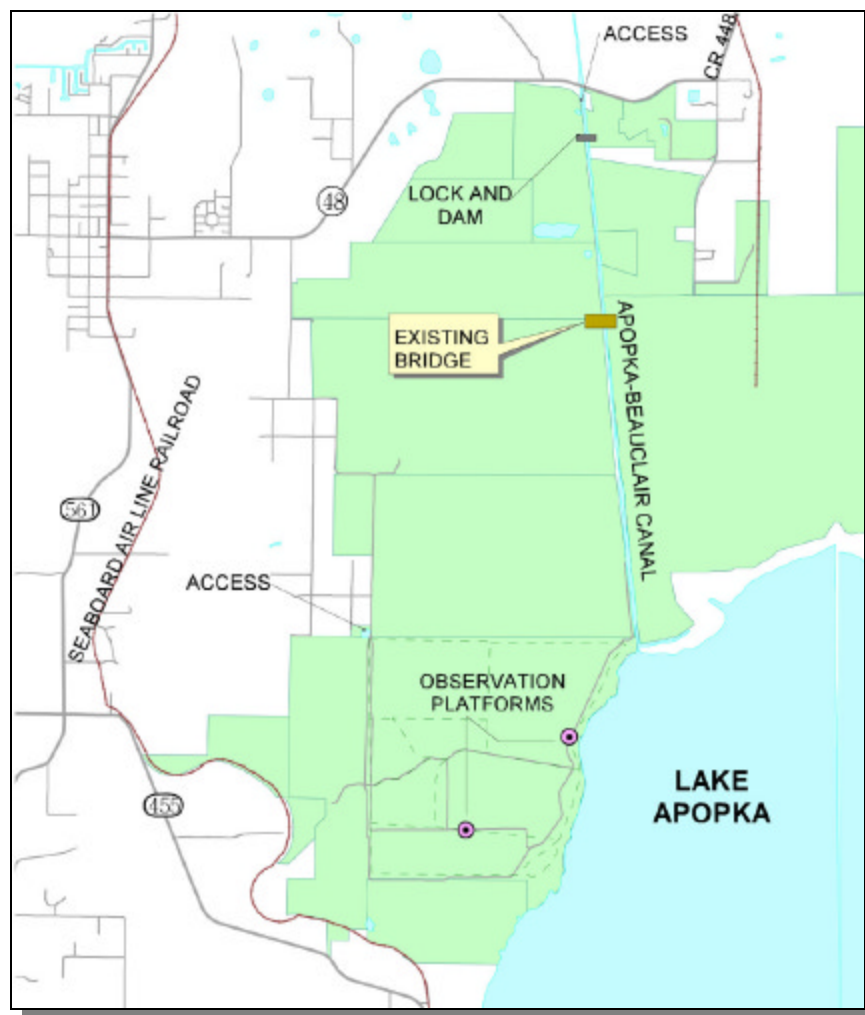
lake, local environment and how it has played a part throughout the area's history. Main access to the park would be provided from the Scenic Highway.

Trails in this part of the County could be more rural in nature to maintain the character of the area, protect the environment and to permit the circulation of horses on the trails.



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Map 9: Trailhead 7 - Aquatic Park



See Map Legend on Page iii.

Figure 8: Aquatic Park Proposed Activities





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Trailhead 8 - Bird Sanctuary/ Nature Center

Existing Conditions:

The St. Johns River Water Management District area has been recognized for the variety of bird species present in the area. A Christmas 1998 bird count (CBC) that encompassed the entire north shore restoration area identified 174 species of birds, the highest species total for an inland count in the 100-year history of the annual CBC. Bird diversity is extraordinary in this area, and the bird list, which continues to grow, now includes more than 270 species.

According to the Orange Audubon Society, for the past 50 years or more, the farm fields created a safe environment for the small flocks of waterfowl. With the public acquisition of the farms in 1998, and the flooding that extended into winter 1998-99, waterfowl use of the area was unprecedented. Tens of thousands of Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, and American Coots were recorded. Restricted access and the current lack of hunting provide extensive roosting and foraging habitats for the birds free from human disturbance.

In the last couple of years, the Orange Audubon Society has been leading occasional bird-watching trips in this area. Recently, the Orange Audubon Society adopted a new strategic

plan calling for the establishment of nature education centers, one of which is proposed to be within the Lake Apopka Area. The center would serve as a facility to conduct educational programs and as a meeting place for bird watchers.

At the recommendation of the Florida Audubon Society in 1998, the St. Johns River Water Management District has adopted, in concept, the creation of a permanent "Shorebird Management Area" on the north shore of Lake Apopka. The proposed management area will include a mosaic of habitats, including some fields flooded shallowly, some left fallow, and some kept as bare ground, and will support numerous shorebirds and other bird species. The Orange Audubon Society recommends that at least 2,000 acres should be included as part of the management area to maintain the numbers and diversity of birds.

According to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, birders are a great market: they spend more money, and impact the community less than most other tourists. And they don't require large capital investments - the more natural the area remains, the more attractive it is to them.

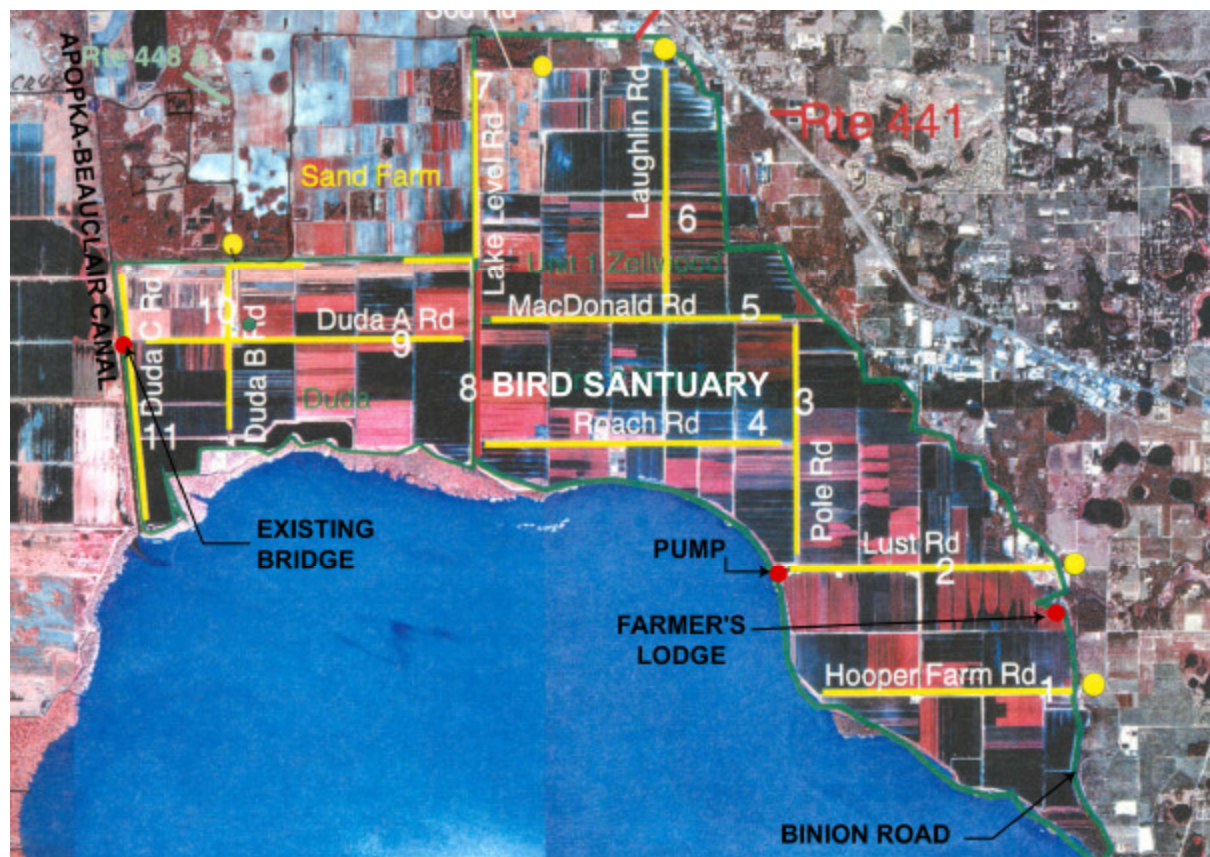
Other types of wildlife seen in the area include alligators, turtles, otters and bobcats.

Other points of interest within the SJRWMD restoration area include the Pump House, and the Farmers' Lodge. These landmarks should be preserved and used to tell the history of Lake Apopka.



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Map 10: Trailhead 8—Bird Sanctuary/Nature Center



Source: SJRWMD and LDI, December 2001.

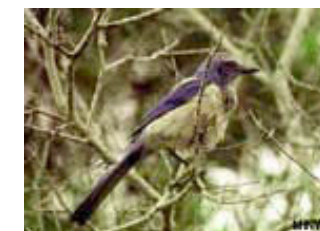
Existing roads/paths

Recommendations:

Staff from the SJRWMD have noted that many uncertainties exist at the present time regarding the future restoration targets for much of the District land on the northern shore of Lake Apopka. The future appearance of these lands is depended upon the results of additional research into the behavior and risks of organochlorine pesticides in wetland systems. Therefore, the plans for this area should remain flexible so as to take advantage of appropriate opportunities as they arise in the near future.

- ? The shoreline for the lake has not been defined, pending federal investigation. When that happens, a trail should be provided along the lakeshore, connecting Clay Island to the Bird Sanctuary, and eventually to Magnolia Park in Apopka.
- ? Continue to support the idea of preserving the Shorebird Management Area. Provide natural trails connecting the nature center with the birding areas. Use signage to highlight specific types of birds, vegetation, and habitats.
- ? Work with SJRWMD and the Orange Audubon Society to establish a Nature Center within the Farmers' Lodge. This project would serve a double purpose - provide a much-needed educational center for bird watchers, and protect a significant resource that makes part of the history of Lake Apopka. It is believed that the farmers used the lodge as a meeting place for social gatherings and barbecues. The loca-

tion of this lodge is not as close to the birding area as other sites are, but its historical value and natural setting should be considered heavily when making a final decision. It could even become a key trailhead in the system if renovated for a public purpose. Should this location become unfeasible, a site near Jones Road such as the Bass Farms office building could be considered.





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Figure 9: Bird Sanctuary/Nature Center Photographs



Existing path through restoration area



Bird watching on the shore of Lake Apopka



Birds within the restoration area



Farmer's Lodge



Birds within the restoration area



Pump Hfuse



View of lake Apopka from the pump House



Apopka-Beauclair Canal



Lake Minneola Urban Waterfront Park

Trailhead 9 - Lake Minneola Urban Waterfront Park

Minneola Waterfront Park and along the Lake Minneola Scenic Trail.

Existing Conditions:

The Lake Minneola Urban Waterfront Park is located in the City of Clermont. Although the site is outside the Lake Apopka Basin, it represents the gateway to the Lake Apopka loop. This trailhead will eventually connect the Lake Apopka Loop with the Gen. James A. Van Fleet Trail (29 miles), increasing the accessibility to the Lake Apopka area. The Van Fleet trail begins in Polk City, west of the State Road 33 overpass, and runs to State Road 50 in Sumter County.

The waterfront park offers the following activities/facilities:

- Beach
- Basketball
- Playground
- Picnic Pavilions
- Dock
- Restrooms

Recommendations:

No changes are recommended. However, in the future, information about the Lake Apopka Loop should be made available at the Lake



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Map 11: Trailhead 9 - Lake Minneola Urban Waterfront Park



See Map Legend on Page iii.

Figure 10: Lake Minneola Urban Waterfront Park Pictures

